

# HOOSIER FOLKLORE BULLETIN

Edited by

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## CONTENTS

Shakerism:	
Shakerism in Indiana; Notes on Shaker Life, Customs, and Music .....	Estella T. Weeks 59
I Busro .....	60
II Shaker Music .....	68
III Singing and Dancing .....	70
IV Customs and Anecdotes .....	72
V Valley Songs .....	74
VI Willow Songs .....	76
VII A Shaker Hymn and a Glossary .....	77
Annual Meeting .....	86
Notes .....	87
A Further Note—on "Swapping Song" .....	W. H. Jansen 87

Feb 1946

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SHAKERISM

Shakerism In Indiana; Notes On Shaker Life, Customs, And Music

Editor's Note

The body of Shaker material here presented is the result of a note, sent to Lt. Herbert Halpert, former editor of this Bulletin, about an Indiana folksong, poking fun at Quakers (See this Bulletin, III (March, 1944), p.3.): Miss Weeks points out that the song was originally surely directed at the Shakers, not the Quakers. In fact, she continues, the chorus uses the words of one of the most characteristic types of Shaker song; and the last line, "I love to be a Shaker," appears in a number of contexts in the Shaker hymns.

Following this note, Miss Weeks sent Lt. Halpert a number of items which she had prepared about the Shakers and their doings in this country, among which was a considerable body of material about Shakerism in Indiana and other items of interest garnered by intensive study of Shaker manuscript collections in the Library of Congress. From this amazing bulk comes this material, re-arranged and condensed in some instances.

For the sake of convenience some historical and doctrinal data of Shakerism should be included by way of further introduction. The Shakers or, more formally, The United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Coming, had their origin about 1747 in Bolton and in Manchester, England. This sect was founded by James and Jane Wardley, Quaker tailors, who had come under the influence of teachings of the French Protestant Camisards--that the time for the destruction of the world was at hand, when Christ would come again to earth. To this group came Ann Lee, a textile worker, then about twenty-two, who found help for her doubts of salvation and for her despair of the evils of life as she had seen it. She had seen visions, brooded, and despaired; and her particular belief--that sexual intercourse was the basis of all sin-- became an essential tenet of the new sect in the celibacy imposed upon its members. For soon she became the leader and then the messiah which had been expected to return to the earth to complete the masculine-feminine godhead taught by the sect.

In 1774, after violent persecution in England, Ann Lee Stanley (for she had married against her will), led by a divine revelation, came to America with eight members of the order who finally settled near Albany, New York. She was now known as Mother Ann; and she helped organize the first Shaker Society in America, at New Lebanon, New York, following a religious revival there in 1780



The Shakers believed that God was both male and female, Christ representing the male principle and Mother Ann the female principle, in whom the second coming was fulfilled. Christ's kingdom on earth became a reality with the establishment of the first Shaker Church. They also believed in the common possession of property; confession of sin; power over disease; separation from the world; simplicity in speech, furnishings and dress; celibacy; and equality of the sexes--with equal rights and responsibilities.

They lived in families of thirty to ninety members, each with its own house and with separate quarters for men and women. Their farms were models of neatness and productivity; and during the nineteenth century the Shaker industries, particularly herb growing and clothing and furniture manufacture were well known and quite profitable.

(For further information see E. D. Andrews, The Gift To Be Simple (New York: J.J. Augustin, 1940); Phillips Barry, Bulletin of the Folk Song Society of the Northeast, No. 4 (1932), pp. 17-18; Carl Carmer, Listen for a Lonesome Drum (New York: 1936), pp. 118-134.)--The Editor

#### I. Busro

When the Shaker ministry at Mt. Lebanon had succeeded in organizing societies not only in New York state but in Massachusetts and Connecticut, Maine and New Hampshire--eleven in all --there came to their notice the news of a great religious awakening that was shaking the then-far-away churches of the Cumberland valley in Kentucky. In the first month of the year 1805, therefore, the leading Ministry decided to send three of their most talented members westward as "propaganda,"--which was the term applied to the missionaries not to their message which latter was termed the gospel.

The diary which tells of these three journeying on foot some 1100 miles, much of the way through unsettled country, and the people they encountered, the scenes they saw, their spiritual experiences in all the vast expanse of new country they traversed is a most vivid and remarkable account which has never to this day seen print. One of the three kept this journal of the journey; but this is not the only evidence we have for the occurrences which led to the founding of Shaker Church Families and later to communities of such "families" in Kentucky, in Ohio, and finally to the one in Indiana, called Busro or West Union, since it was to the west of the main center at Union Village in Warren county in the central part of the state of Ohio. One of the most valuable of the very earliest of the western diaries and journals was kept by Richard McNemar who had been a leading Presbyterian preacher of the region before the "awakening" referred to above. Before the year 1805, in fact, he had won wide fame throughout that region by his powerful sermons at the great camp meetings which at times drew as many as five thousand persons from a region of distances, hard travel conditions, few conveyances and sturdy pioneer folk sparsely



scattered over the land of several states. Richard it was, in fact, who formed with Malcolm Worley (who also turned Shaker) and five others the famed "Seven Schismatics" who were excommunicated by the Springfield Presbytery for their doctrinal divergence from the orthodox. Having left their old established church, they and their followers, which in Richard's case were his whole congregation, it is said, were indeed ripe to receive "new light," a "new gospel." So it was that when Richard met the Shaker Three in the home of Worley, he, though at first skeptical, did in time become convinced of their claims to having that new light, that truer gospel and a more godly way of life to advance. And so it was that he, his family, his brother and family, and other relatives and the others of his congregation set up a new "communion" that was also a "commune," for all things were to be held in common, all labor was to be for the common good, and all were to strive to "travel onward" together both in daily living and in the soul's travel toward godliness.

The very sincerity of their conversion to the Shaker's way of belief and of living soon led to their spreading this new joy and hope they had found. Before a decade had passed there were established four major societies in Ohio, and two in Kentucky, and all were flourishing. Then, in common with the procedure always, there came ones from afar, seeking the light; and in this case the "new opening of the gospel power" had occurred on the Wabash, in the region called the Great Prairie, not far from the modern city of Indianapolis. This was on a creek called the Busseron or Busserow or Busro; but while identifying the location by this name--when after a time of visiting and inquiry into the sincerity of the people's faith, the possibilities and suitability of the location for settlement, and the need that would exist for financial as well as spiritual encouragement of this new colony, they decided to make a Shaker community there on the Busseron;--it was given a new and Shaker name, West Union.

Members were drawn from the locality only to a small extent at first, for the region had few settlers. But members of strength, courage and the desire to pioneer still more than was still needed in Ohio, went west from several of the Shaker societies. These were carefully selected and their journey approved and facilitated in every way. According to the Shaker custom, diaries were kept, and some of these later were copied into the official journals of the Kentucky and Ohio leading societies where West Union Believers finally returned after all the endured hardships at Busro were found unavailing and that society was given up.

Such records later were compiled and there is a fairly complete journal history for the society at Busro, and especially the reproduced diary of the sad and trying trek of these Shaker folk back to Ohio, then to return and try again at Busrow and finally the second and sadder trek back to Ohio to remain there. This history has been published, though obscurely, in Ohio Archeological records. So far as I know, the state of Indiana has never claimed this colorful and illuminating bit of its own history, nor these folk who for a time were that state's own citizens.



West Union gave to the great treasury of Shaker music some hymns that are fully authenticated by Shaker manuscripts as having been written there in the Shaker village. Those I know best are by some of the Ohioans who served these pious folk as missionaries. But there are many anonymous books which some day I hope to be able to identify from internal evidence and suspect already I shall find among these some that are indubitably West Union's own product.

One of the First Three Propaganda from the eastern headquarters of Shakerism was Issachar Bates, who brought them the gospel straight from the Fount, for being long a member at both Watervliet, N.Y. (Niacayune) and Mt. Lebanon, N. Y. (which succeeded Watervliet after 1821 as the headquarters of the sect) Bates was long in personal contact with all the original leaders and drew his doctrinal concepts straight from their preachings. He must have been a fascinating character, this Bates; an ex-life player with the Revolutionary army, a man of sprightly nature, given to most vigorous participation in their dancing in worship, second only to "Little Benjamin" (Benjamin Seth Youngs, second of the great Three and author of the first of their published doctrinal texts, that was issued in Ohio in 1808... and who, I suspect strongly, was the "little man" that a bit of a song in the Hoosier Folklore Bulletin derided!). But it is of Bates I here wish to speak further.

In an old bundle of letters, mostly songs, treasured long by Elder Richard McNemar, the ex-Presbyterian preacher, I found a song I had seen some years ago and otherwise attributed. It was titled "A Winter's Journey to Busro." On this copy is the notation at the end "Issachar's"; on the one seen earlier it was attributed to Oliver Hampton, a later Elder, also a Hymn writer, at the Union Village community. It is proven that Bates and Richard were together, did indeed make the journey to Busro together, in the year 1809, and there Bates remained for considerable time--some years--helping the Brethren to establish "Order." I have the whole of this Hymn I believe, but not at hand now. It begins, "The 16th day of January, 1809, thro stormy rains, thro ice and snow, From Turtle Creek we took our Journey to see the Brethren at Busro...." There are 13 verses describing that relatively short (!) pioneer journey of over 300 miles, almost entirely on foot! The verses end with the words

"Until we reached the Busro soil and the kind welcome  
we received  
Made rich amends for all our toil."

In a fascinating hymnal indited by one Eldress Paulina Bryant of the Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, community, on whose title page she had written her name, this same Journey poem appears in full; beneath it she has written "Copied here in this Book on June 26, 1856." Issachar Bates remained long at Busro, and I am constantly finding hymns he wrote during that period, that therefore must have been written there. Some few are definitely given the "West Union" end memo line. This story of the journey very likely



in time was used as a hymn, since when the Shakers copied poems of Shaker origin not intended for singing use they plainly called them poems and wrote them into other volumes. The Shakers at most societies and for much of their historical existence used volumes made of paper created in their own shops and bound up by themselves, very often bound before they were written in. Their bindings in a general way seem to have followed pretty much the pattern of books they recorded buying, or that may by other evidence be considered of non-Shaker manufacture. So when they started a hymn collection for the Family hymns to be recorded in, or when they started to collect old hymns of a by-gone Shaker day from the lips of their own old-timers, or from out of some of the oldest of their own peculiar books, they used for each kind of hymns, for songs, for anthems, etc. a separate book. One book was used by a single writer usually, though some have been found with a variety of notational and verbal chirography; but there seems to have been also the custom for a book, partially filled, to be passed on to another to write in. One suspects from the custom in many other points of "order" that this passing on was a matter of assignment, just as the recording of worship was assigned. Early it seems that this may have occurred spontaneously, been found to serve a useful purpose, and so have been perpetuated as "order." Some books cover the writer's whole lifetime... as shown by the careful mortuary records of each Family, of which I have a considerable number. Again a book may have been written by two or three persons; sometimes one suspects this multiple inditing, yet is hardly able to feel sure of it as the hands are so similar and so accurately so. Again there is abundant individuality in the chirography. I should like to see study applied to some of the notation scripts! It might help greatly in identifying some of the entirely anonymous hymnals! There is such copious ordinary writing of many of these musical writers that one should be able to correlate the two.

I have gathered a considerable amount of data on their book binding, their paper making, the rare occasions when their books (nearly all leather bound) bore what would seem the "forbidden superfluity" of pyrographed design! Some of the paper they used is obviously not their own for tucked away in the hymnals and on the letters one finds curious and charming watermarks and impressed seals that are clearly makers' symbols.

The story of their hand printing of their early books is another matter I have gathered data on as it came to hand. One young lad of 17 or so learned to print, up in New Hampshire, on an issue of 3,000 copies of their Holy and Sacred Roll and Book... and ended up by going into Boston to consult a typefounder and then going home to cast his own type in order to try and print the lateral Shakerscript music notation! Nothing ever seems to have stopped a Shaker once he (or she!) received the "gift" to make some venture! And in this whole story of their music there were as many, or more, women who "received" as there were men. Some of their best beloved hymns are associated with their well loved eldersses and sisters. It was the "gift" to do something that counted, not the sex of the doer. Their Laws call for a Ministry Lot of four, two men and two women; or at least one of each; and



similarly each Family and each post in the Family has two to serve, except where the duties were specially divided as the care of the farm animals being for the men to do and the care of the kitchen for the women. But let the Family dwindle, and hands be needed in either place, the other sex would be called to assist. There was equality of service as well as of rule unless a very well recognized principle of differing strength or of recognized superior skill (as in the women mending the men's garments) existed.

I believe that more of the old records of West Union may exist. The paucity of them at the time the small history with the diary of the treks was printed should very likely have been relieved when the bulk of the western records were salvaged. On the other hand they may actually have perished or been left behind in Indiana. In comparison with what has been recovered from all the other societies, Busro it would seem has least of all remaining. But I say this with caution for I have not as yet had opportunity to fully canvas by actual handling all that I know to exist.

Elder Issacher's poems were never "grand," seldom even very impressive to the modern sense. But they were warmly flushed with the simplicity of his Shaker faith and must have added greatly to his ministry among an humble folk facing life on the very edge of pioneer land. Here is another hymn he wrote while at Busro:

"Now by my motion I will prove  
How much the work of God I love...."

To get the flavor of that simple verse you must quite literally be able to hear the intonations of their speech, for out in that region today there would be little lack of rhyming unison in the words "prove" and "love," for neither is vowelized as sharply there as in the East of our country. So too one must know, in other songs, how certain words are curiously mis-accented; when you have the music's rhythmic "mode-signs" correctly in understanding you can see quite clearly in many cases why the Shaker verse seems not to have proper cadence. Motion is the Shaker alternate word for their word Labor which was equivalent to "shake" and meant the whole sequence of ways of "shaking."

James McNemar, nephew of the famous Elder Richard, wrote a "Valley" song that Eldress Paulina copied into her Kentucky collection of "Ancient Hymns" in the 1850's. So here is one at least we know to be not of Eastern origin. James called this "The Watchword" and there were four verses of eight lines each—a really short hymn for a western Shaker to write. He was beyond his early twenties when he wrote it.

"Along the low valley where love does abound,  
Is where the rich fruits of the gospel are found...."

This was found also among Richard McNemar's treasured letters. James was the son of Richard's brother Garner who with his whole family joined the Shakers almost as soon as Richard did.



The first authentic record I yet have of the sending of hymns in written form to the western societies is a diary note dated September, 1819. Before that only the words seem to have been exchanged. This one in 1819 was "pricked down" and has been found, I believe, in the original small paper slip form. It was on a five-line staff not a quarter inch deep and the notes were pin head size, imitative in ink of some others found that actually were pin pricks through the paper; some so pricked were found that were overinked in the pin holes to preserve them in the soft paper. This was done at the time the Privileged Five were "learned to write the notes"; so it would seem that though the Shakers allege that their own notation was "received" in 1807, it still was not in use at the main society. This is in part supported by another society's record that it was first used there about twelve years later than its "reception."

In 1819, September, eight Hymns and ten Anthems were sent to Union Village, the main seat of western Shakerism, and with them three Spiritual Songs, two Verse Hymns (probably the "little songs" of one verse each) and also six Labouring Songs. Quite a labor of devotion, the inditing of all those—twenty-nine in all! One of them was "Humiliation." The diarist also notes that to West Union were sent one Anthem, three Labouring Songs, and ten or more Hymns. Note the distinguishing of anthem, hymn, song, etc. One gets to recognize which are which, in the Hymnals, by their form, their mode signs, etc., but it is a long slow process of recognition; and facility therein is slowly and sometimes hardly won! One of the tunes sent to Union was "I want to feel little, I want to feel small"—here is the ethic of the Valley Hymns in earlier guise.

But to return to Issachar Bates and West Union hymns. In Paulina's Book is another of his hymns (he was a prolific "receiver" of them). His little personal pledge

No longer I'll delay  
My little all to give...

was probably written for the new converts he made while staying on so long at West Union (Busro) to "encourage the believers there."

Another he is credited with while there was the six-versed hymn (long for him) called "Industry." It is built on a Biblical theme familiar to us all. Other hymns by other "instruments" come very close to this one in wording. I call them the Shaker "Bee Songs." The first I ever found was in a whole volume of monitory songs, which I long thought were probably used only in teaching children in the Shaker schools, until I came upon diary references to the "spirit authors," addressing such songs to Believers in the Young Believers Order—that is to say, in the Novitiate or Gathering Order, or First Family. The Shakers taught that one must relax to the receiving of ideas in school even as one should "shake" one's whole body, or some particularly tense parts of it, into a state of relaxation, even into a trance-like state by the dance called "The Whirl," in order to bring one into communion with the supernatural—the spiritual world—and so into a condition receptive to wisdom, to song, to admonishment and



guidance by way of messages, "Words," etc. So whatever your age you took this little song to heart quite as a little child might, for you still were a Young Believer who had far to travel yet on the Way of the Gospel, which was not only "Hands to work" but "hearts to God," which was what Mother Anna taught the very earliest believers.

Here is one version of the song called "Industry":

All Nature calls for busy hands  
For this is Heaven's decree.  
The beast, the bird, the insect stands  
A Monitor to me.

The little busy artful bee  
Works every shining hour  
And her industry I can see  
In every op'ning flower.

Not all of Issachar Bates' hymns were so happy. During his ministry at West Union (Busro) his was the sad task to open his mind to the "spirit" of the entire community on occasions both frequent and sad, when beloved members of that hard pressed group came to the end of their earthly travel. For in spite of the Shakers' firm belief that death is a release and that only joy and new powers, new and blissful experiences, await those who are prepared to travel on and upward in the Beyond, there to mingle with all the saints who have gone before (who, by the way, need not all have been Shakers, by any means), nevertheless, in this period of Shaker history the partings were indeed sadly numerous. And in this, West Union seems to have topped all the societies in the frequency of funerals. Several of the leading members of the Western Lead succumbed there, among them several who were signers of the First Covenant of the Shaker Church, at Mt. Lebanon, New York, in 1795. One of these was Eldress Ruth Darrow, and Elder Issachar was "sensitive" indeed when he voiced the hymn which had "come" to him on that occasion and in which all united, "seeming to anticipate the words, never having heard them before." One can imagine the vast stillness of the Great Prairie, its solemnizing impression, as those dozens of mourning followers of the beloved Ruth, trod in slow and halting pace to the slowest of their modes and sang:

A Mother in Israel, a Mother indeed  
Has left her dear children, her Spiritual Seed....

Verse after verse, they intoned; and the "air" was "soft" (which in Shaker terminology meant it was minor; had it been major, it would have been called "sharp" or "natural").

Again in 1823, one finds another record. Many times between, Elder Issachar lifted his voice as "instrument" to release the spirit of love, of admiration, of recognition for a life of true Gospel travel. In 1823, when Eldress Martha Sandford died at Busro, Issachar's hymn sang forth:

Our dearly beloved Eldress Martha's fled  
To worlds beyond the regions of the dead....



Three years, less three days, later, at Busro also, died Elder John Dunlavy, author of one of the best known of the very early Shaker Doctrinal works, The Manifesto. He was one of the famous "Seven Preachers" who led the Religious Revolution in Kentucky and Ohio, who broached the Great Schism in the Presbyterian Church of that area and day, and who eventually turned to the Shaker faith, under the persuasive preaching of this same Elder Issachar Bates and of John Meacham, son of Elder Joseph Meacham (the one-time Baptist) and of Benjamin Seth Youngs - those three who were called "The Propaganda," the first missionaries of Shakerism to the West, who traveled, indeed, some 1100 miles afoot to carry their gospel thither. That their gospel was potent may well be judged from the fact that whole congregations followed men like Dunlavy into the Shaker fold. One gathers a very human glimpse of these men: the Elder Issachar singing--and all his people with him--singing out the sadness in their hearts, not holding their anguish close in Promethean stolidness--an Elder singing the common sentiments out into the whole firmament to accompany the Dear Departed Others. And then all the folk whose spirit surely was in this funeral custom and in the song's music as well as verse, treasuring that song, singing it at other funerals too (though a new song was always received by some member of the community when any least one or greatest died). Indeed there is sober record also of songs that were sung by the deceased at his own funeral, or "heard" by all the assembled mourners on their return home, or possibly the next day or thereafter!

Of the intimate story of Busro's history little has yet come to my notice though it may well exist in unread manuscripts. Most that I know is gleaned from the carefully pieced together double journal kept by Samuel Swann McClelland, Shaker Elder of the period. With considerable historical acumen he gathered, from older journals and from the records of one of the Kentucky communities where later the Busro members tarried, a very consistent account of the dramatic parallel trips in the wagons and the boats when the Busro settlers finally surrendered to their troubles there and set forth to return to Union Village and thence to Whitewater and Watervliet, Ohio, where most of them ended their days in peace and industry and faith. This account covers the years 1805-1832. So it tells of the events that led to the abandonment of the settlement twice over, decimated both by disease and the maraudings of the Indiana. The fate of the society was deeply deplored and all possible done to alter the trend toward closure. The Journal still is extant. It was reprinted almost in full, and with some added notes, some forty years ago by the Ohio Archeological Society.

Elder Issachar himself, in his old age, and when his ministry was ended, returned to the parent society at Mt. Lebanon, New York, and there ended his days. At his funeral there was sung a hymn he had himself composed at Busro and instructed to be so used.



## II. Shaker Music

Some receivers of songs were acknowledgedly more sensitive, more gifted than others. Some, for instance, might never "receive" but one hymn in a lifetime, while others like lovely Eldress Antoinette or Sister Martha Anderson might be like a perpetual spring, ever bubbling over with their gift of song. (Martha is reputed to have received as many as twenty hymns, tune and all, in a single day, and on many such days; and in her lifetime, it is said, she received upwards of two thousand hymns.) The curious thing about this gift of song is the individuality of the songs themselves. In looking over more than two hundred of their manuscript hymnals in the Shakerscript notation I have very seldom indeed found duplicate verses or tunes, unless they were indicated to be known duplicate copies.

It is amazing how hard it is to duplicate exactly the appearance of the Shaker music when the detail thereof really is not too complex in any one hymn tune. The reason for the difficulty, I believe, is due not only to the handwriting characteristics of so many very individual persons, but also to the fact that for years they used pens which they had made for themselves and which for a long time had no slit in the nib; these were long made of silver which they procured by melting down small silver coins (this then was not an illegal procedure). Later they made steel pens, from steel they made themselves from iron taken from a near-by iron mine which still gives its name to the village of Richmond Iron Mine. They had less success with their efforts at making steel; so they took to buying strip steel for pens and at last to buying pens themselves. They did make ruling pens (five, four, or three-line gang pens); but eventually they ceased to use the five-line staff for their music and simplified the task greatly by using only one line. Still later they used no line at all. The quality of the workmanship in these hymnals is meticulously neat, beautifully executed and most attractive and legible. In all the hymnals I have seen, only one was crudely penned; none is written in pencil, for they were a sacred task, done by the few who were permitted to learn to write the notation; and they were meant for permanent record.

The notation forms are most fascinating. The same symbols were used at different periods with quite different meanings, as when, for instance, the use of a super- or sub-scripted dash added to a letter meant at one period a record of the note's time value and at another its octave location! The same variety of meaning attaches, at times, to their use of capital and small letters, to light and blacker letters of the same size, to even the position of the capital or the small letters. One variety of the notation used three positions of capitals only--vertical, left-slanted, and right-slanted. They wrote without key symbols. Their rhythms were indicated by curiously often-changing and often-changed mode signs. Yet all they did, in the writing of the tunes, had definite order, according to the Shaker belief that all things done must be "in order." The whole range of the notational varieties form a distinct and very logical pattern of evolution musicologically. The whole pattern is only to be gleaned when one



knows examples in considerable number, from all the societies and especially from many periods historically, in each of the societies, and often in each Family of one society.

By the greatest of good fortune for modern students of the old music, they had a few so interested in the notational form itself, and in making its use understood well by their privileged "singers' groups" that they compiled manuals to explain the different phases of the music. I have found a number of such and they cover a good part of the more than century-long evolution of the notation. In addition I have found letter and countless diary and journal references to their ponderings over the notation forms and their use, and over the musical theory they evolved as well. It is truly remarkable to see with this development going steadily and constructively on while yet the rank and file of the members were creating the songs spontaneously, passing them on by vocal means only and developing so strong a folk-consciousness in singing the music, that all of the manuals clearly show arduous attempts to fit the notation to the "Shaker way," the "order of signing" in the songs developed by the folk itself, rather than to fit the Shaker way to the notation.

It is most delightful to find that some of the leaders experimented with, and to a certain extent really considerably used, code verse in their hymns. One such leader used at least three ciphers in his diary, another in his hymns, and then tried to write tune as well as verse in shorthand! It may have been this which gave another Elder at a different community the idea of streamlining and then reducing to shorthand-musical-notation the tunes in his great work of many thousands of hymns! The result, though curious indeed, is fascinatingly easy to read. In addition, messages from the dead, and these often in the form of songs or anthems or hymns or dance tunes, at times were "received" in "unknown tongues," after the pattern of the earliest Christian Church at Pentecost. These at times were actually verses wholly (or partly) in code. No one of the world (non-Shakers) has ever realized they were anything but gibberish. But I have accumulated quantities of such hymn verse and am partly able to decode it.

What is usually known of their music, however, is not these Shakerscript hymns but those very late ones (post-1875, several volumes) which were printed at first on their own presses—by hand—then later by commercial printers. These were in round notes. To a large extent these are comprised of hymns all written after the Civil War and by Shakers who joined the sect that late. They represent quite a different type, although their verse is clearly akin to the basic Shaker doctrinal themes. Certain of the volumes are stated to be of an inspirational and spiritual origin as were those of the earlier era. One or two volumes are plainly intended as Shaker "translations" of the best loved of the old hymns; but some of these I have tested show clearly a misunderstanding of the old notation forms; others show changed rhythms (which in part seem only the further changes in line with those evolutionally occurring earlier). Some of the hymnals seem from their prefaces to be composed of entirely new "receivings" which were conceived in the new—round note—notation. The use of round notes was deliberately adopted for printing purposes after a trial with the old notation on several of the Shaker presses—



one of which was the same that printed their tiny herb package labels. Round notes were adopted not for the Shakers themselves, but at first for the creating of single songs to insert in their propaganda publication, The Shaker, which was meant for sale to the world's folks as well as to Shakers. Soon, however, such single pages of songs were gathered into small leaflets and then finally into a book. These are the books now in use in Shaker homes; but most of these Shakers I have known in recent years sang their songs from memory and had never even seen the old Shakerscript books nor heard of them, in fact, until I told of seeing them.

The essential thing to remember about Shaker music of the manuscript music periods, up to the publication of their first single hymns (1815), is that the songs themselves--even when attributed to definite persons--were essentially of folk character because of the complete identification of the individual in mind and faith and general understanding and habitual behavior with the spiritual ego of the whole. This "whole" might change--being at times the Family, at times the Community, of the Society--in the verse concepts of the hymn or in the circumstances of its origin; but it was always Shakerism--the whole flavor of faith and way of life and hope of future bliss--that actuated the hymn's first utterance, that dictated its being "wrote down" or "received" or even its collecting in after years. The music patterns, quite as much as those of the verse or the steps or arrangement of the dances, sprang from these generic sources. There were outstanding singers, there were leaders of the singers, there were elders of the ministry who used the tunes and the verse and the emotion-stimulating and emotion-controlling and thought-persuading power latent in the hymns and dances; but, even when such use and such leading and such outstanding personal quality was noteworthy enough to find recording in some manuscript diary meant for none other to read, the folk quality is most vividly revealed in the instinctive grasp of psychologic values--of how to take up and carry on the simplest contribution of any member of the folk, young or old, saint or beginner in the faith, and how to round out and bind together the daily, hourly experiences to the end that all were ever attaining more and more to true Shaker quality.

### III. Singing And Dancing

Here is a bit from a diary: "Sept. 1. 1816. . . The Elders speak in Meeting considerable respecting our manner of labouring..... the subject now is we take 3 steps advance whereas before we only took two. I always held myself to go only 2 and never understood contrary."

Here too is the first public notice of the "singers' group," the privileged five allowed to learn to sing by note instead of rote--George, Luther, William and Edward (the fifth felt it his duty to not take so much time away from his work!). "They have waited long for this time," says the diarist (their young Elder who taught them to read the music he had copied down), and says he, "I wish them success."

Fifteen months later he indites in his diary: "Night meeting: We laboured a song or two [note he here does not say hymn, but song] the Elder Brother said he believed we had better all shake a little to



throw off the weight and cloud of darkness that gathered to us [after a hard day's work in the gardens no wonder they were tired] and to turn facing each other, the first rank to the "Singers" the second rank to the third, the fourth to face the fifth. . . We did so and though some mortifying to nature, I believe it was a help."

When a hymn or song was "laboured" or sung with "motion," a variety of manners of shaking was implied. Either one shook out of oneself all latent evil, all rigidity of contumacy against the inflowing power of Good, or one shook to invite the operations of the Spiritual Force, the Power of the Almighty which made it possible to receive and to utilize the good gifts from heavenly sources. As the years wore on in Shaker history such shaking lost its characteristic of entire individuality in the pattern of the shaking; it ceased on most occasions to be "promiscuous" (the old Shaker phrase, meaning unregulated or non-uniform), and gradually assumed so fixed a pattern that it was rather forgotten by worldly observers, and perhaps also by the mass of the Shakers themselves, that there ever had been that individualistic way of labouring a hymn. Instead two modes of laboring or "motion" were adopted, whether by common consent or by the elders' decree we are not yet sure. These were the two somewhat stiff-postured shaking of the arms (later only of the forearms with the elbows held rigid against the sides) in a vibrating up and down motion (a) with the palms turned downward and fingers flexed and curved downward--this to indicate the shaking out of sin--and (b) with palms turned upward and the arms slightly more elevated--to indicate the receiving of all good influences and gifts of God.

One bit of interesting evidence comes from a non-Shaker whose elderly relative had, as a child, been reared in an eastern Shaker school. It seems that a regular part of the routine in that school for small children was learning how to shake properly. A little song was sung and to its simple words first one hand was shaken by a child; then the like hand by another child; then both children shook together. The second repeated the performance, with the same little verse, to a third child. The three joined in shaking, then four, and so on till all were shaking the one hand. Then in the same routine the other hand was shaken. Then one foot; then two feet; then the head, the shoulders, the whole body were set swaying. Then with accelerated pace the whole group shook more and more violently until perhaps one more sensitive than the rest (or more imaginative) would suddenly fall in a trance on the floor. And mayhap also he would begin to receive a song, or speak some doctrinal words, or prophesy.

This procedure was to any Shaker quite normal and an evidence of the child performer's being moved by the same operations that were recognized as the characteristic evidence of the influx of the divine, and in the child so affected marked that one for watching as a potential medium as the years wore on. Back in the early days of the era of the Forties when the Shaker spiritualistic experiences were at their height there was not only this fact of the whirling and the falling in a trance as a sort of apotheosis of the shaking or motion along with the hymns; but there were definite dances based on this whirling, during which not one alone but a whole group of dancers were wont to share in the ecstatic experience as a kind of climax to the singing which had progressed through a series of augmented rhythms. It was at this particular period



too that several of the elders in several societies devoted so much effort to working out their elaborate system of modes for the Shaker music, with all their curious mode signs which have remained for nearly a century unintelligible to non-Shakers.

As the shaking took on a measure of regularity in form, so too did the elaboration of the shaking into "the step manner" of motion, the "travel," "circle," "round," etc. There were also the "drumming step," "shuffle," "turning shuffle," "chain regular," "walking," "square order shuffle," "square turn," "Heavenly march," "native square march," "hive," "oven," "labor," "solemn march,"--all manners. (Manners in Shaker speech means the step, the hymn when sung without dancing) This "step manner" was not a continual progression forward, such as we call a march. It was a mode of shaking the feet which carried the shaker forward and back within a very short space on the floor, somewhat in the manner of a slightly complicated way of marking time before one begins to start forward in a march. This step had variations; one of which was likely to carry the shaker forward several paces on the floor and backward the same. The step seems to have usually been done in ranks and rows. This was the "standing order" for singing the hymns and the restrained forward and back motion could be indulged in without disturbing the ensemble of the whole congregation. The rows were straight lines crosswise of each end of the Meeting Room; the ranks were straight but slanted in opposite directions from a central point at the rear, thus opening an inverted V in the center, with the open end facing forward. The elder who perhaps was momentarily leading the hymn, having pitched it vocally, was thus visible to every individual in his congregation. This was the formal manner of standing in the late thirties and the forties and much longer. Earlier, it is believed, the ranks must have been closed.

#### IV. Customs And Anecdotes

The Shaker funeral hymns were sung by all the believers present, while marching to the grave, and often after returning to the family dwelling house where they held a service called Memorial, at which the spirit of the deceased was reported to be often present, tarrying before starting on the long travel to the outer regions of the blest; and at times it is recorded that the deceased was the author of a song "received" by one of the mourners, who in turn sang it to those assembled. Again the song simply was received by one or another, or by several of the living believers left to continue their earthly travel. Funerals were always held within twenty-four hours after the death; in this they deliberately followed the Mosaic custom, believing it well so to do from every point of view. The coffin was made by the brethren who had woodworking skill. No fancy internal decorative lining was placed in it; a clean and beautifully smoothed box was sufficient--again after the tradition of Israel. One old diary records how a skilled carpenter made his own coffin, feeling himself failing in years; illness followed, but his life was spared--according to his belief, because he was not ready to go, being too vain in having wanted to make his own coffin big enough for his tall self! So he kept the box in his bedroom to remind himself that the human sould is a frail thing at best! On occasion it is recorded how a dying sister or brother was calmly measured for a coffin while still conscious, and at times was thus endued with strength to recover, being intent to "fool them yet" in quite unsaintly fashion.



One exceptional account tells of the beloved deceased inviting a sensitive sister to go with her on the outward journey. "So she did so," the account says, "travelling some 500 miles on the way to heaven all the while recounting the conversation held with the deceased, the messages received to be transmitted to the believers at home, the sensations felt by both, and somewhat regarding those of the Spirit World met along the way"! To the Shaker, death is no more "sleep and forgetting," for one simply and happily travels onward, along a different road; that is all. One remembers and revisits the friends at home on earth; one can influence them for their help on the upward path; one can counsel them; and, if one is especially privileged, being dead, yet can return with such messages and find some instrument sensitive enough to receive and pass those messages on. Always, to the Shaker, the familiar reaches of garden and field, of path or road or room or shop are invisibly peopled, not only with the beloved dead but with famous persons who too may on occasion have the gift to make their presence known.

For instance, one sister, now gone forward about two years, used to walk down the Shaker village street with me, seat herself in her calm and usual way upon a roadside rock, converse upon the most ordinary topics and then in equally usual tone and manner remark: "There! you see her? There is Antoinette (or Martha, or the Elder Richard, as the case may be, although both Martha and Antoinette had been dead half a century). There she comes down the orchard. Her cap string is awry again! I must straighten it for her when she comes high!" And then, remembering me, she would say; "Aye! I forgot that ye has not the gift"(to see as any Shaker could)! She was a very sane little old lady; one never in the least felt that she was fey. Her explanation was simple: I could hear music over the radio, having no idea how it got into the box or how transmitted through the air. Well, did not some animals see what humans could not? Was it so strange that a Shaker who all her life had courted the gift to see should acquire it, by the grace of the Most High?

Another of the Shaker customs was the "Cleansing Gift," for which there was a whole month of preparation. At one time the preparation lasted for three months. The whole of the story of this gift is not yet clear to me on the basis of manuscript descriptions. It was to some extent mixed up with Mother Ann's birthday, and with the gleaning of the fields in the post-harvest period. It combined both the outward tidying of the fields and outbarns and the storing up of the fruits for the winter. And for the women it meant an equal cleansing of the innermost recess of every closet and nook in the Shaker house; every bureau drawer must meet "sacrifice," and finally there must too be a cleansing gift for the individual's own heart and mind. All evil thoughts about others, all selfish reluctance to forgive small or large ills done one by others--all must be cleansed out of one so that, when Christmas Day came, one was ready and holy for the primitive Christian love feast, a whole day with no food but bread and water. Gradually these multiple concepts seem to have merged into the concept that New Year's Day was the day of the sacrifice (sacrifice of selfishness); and gifts to the poor were made; the day was spent in meditation and prayer. Diarists (each Family had one for brethren, one for the sisters) literally turned over a new leaf.



There is a considerable amount of hymnody recognizable as meant for use at that time. One very peculiar aspect not always observed at this season but in line with the same concepts was that of the "War Cry," and the songs for that use are at times enough to set one's mind aghast. The very setting of "The Cry" was eerie; not at midnight (though some of the songs call it the Midnight Cry) but usually after one had gone very soundly asleep, say about three in the morning, the silent sleeping rooms were rent with the loud shouts and vocal cries of a group of singers, led by an elder appointed to do so; "Arise! Shake! Cast off thy sins!" And all would don robes in haste, all in due Shaker perfection of fully-dressed modesty, and go a-tiptoe down to the Family Meeting Room (chapel); and there in the dim swaying lanterns' light the dance of worship would begin—so to continue until full dawn in the sky. New believers, first experiencing this soul-shaking ordeal, give vivid accounts by which one may judge of the nervous and emotional tensility of the occasion and of the heights of emotional fervor in the dancing and the whole congregation's singing.

Four of the original eighteen Societies (communities) remain in existence today; but, alas, in the words of a dear sister now far on her heavenly way, the Shakers' own gospel seems to have "gone below the surface." All members are now elderly, in or beyond their eighties for the most part, and none now among them seems to have the oldtime fire of proselyting; they say "there is no gift." Instead, they also say that so much the Shakers taught, that was in that day so revolutionary a manner of thought and belief, and longer an amazing practice, now is accepted belief and practice for all the land—as their belief in the equality of women with men in labor and in reward for toil, their pedagogy of industrial and practical education for youth, their belief that labor and worship must go hand in hand and both be an integral part of life. Perhaps one of the reasons they have persisted so long, living as they do in communal fashion and by the toil of their members' labors, is that—though in their day they seemed, to the adherents of other sects, doctrinal extremists—they were ever rational, constructive, moderate and given to high standards in all the social aspects of their life. Any Shaker will tell you that Shaker products of all their crafts sold because they were religiously made as perfect as they knew or could devise or learn to make them. Anyone who has ever owned and used a Shaker chair, or some of their beautifully woven rugs, or worn a Shaker cloak can testify to that perfecting of craftsmanship. For they lived their motto: "Hands to work and hearts to God." In their worship not only the hands served His glory but every fiber of one's whole body. That, and not just the one simple gesture of shaking the palms upward, is why that originally derisive word, Shakers, came in time to be their own manner of referring to themselves.

## V. Valley Songs

Among the Shaker collections there are many Valley Songs or "Vale of Humiliation" songs, the sense being that of bowing, bowing low and lower and surrendering all pride of self in deepest humility and consciousness of sin. In many cases the "low" or "lowly"



refrain was coupled with the idea of travel: "I will walk low, lowly, low in the valley and I will bow-bow-bow-bow and mortify my spirit. I will bend and bow before my Lord...as I travel onward to salvation."

Whether in rhythmic and rhymed verse or in recitative or anthem form, travel almost always meant that they wound up marching. Sometimes with their peculiar sort of hitching "lift and lower"—"step and halt" routine in the march; sometimes in straightforward "ragular travel" or smooth rhythmic march time as we worldlings call a march. Sometimes they "walked the narrow path" (a literal chalk line on the floor), heel and toe stepping.

#### LOWLY

Lowly in the vally, the vally, the vally  
Lowly in the vally, the vally, the pretty vally, low  
Lum diddle lum diddle lum diddle low, low,  
Lowly in the vally, the vally, the pretty vally, low.

#### TRAVELLING TUNE

De lo salle va salle vane low, low;  
In the Valley I will go; salle vane low low  
There the gifts of God do flow salle vane low, low.

#### QUICK

O Mother's pretty path I'll ever walk  
Mother's pre--ty path I'll ever walk  
Lan de ve va ne, lan de ande ve  
lance ve ne va ne,  
vi ne an ce ve.

#### REQUEST

Guardian angels hover round me  
Help me down low very low  
Make me humble, make me holy  
Help me conquer every foe.

#### ANTHEM

I am:  
I am, the holy archangel that sang on the way;  
while we were a-coming: from Eng--land;  
into A--mer--i--ca;;  
O, the meeting was joyful when we landed here:  
sil val le la val le va so le va ne.



## VI. WILLOW SONGS

The refrain of the Valley Songs gradually merged into their Willow Songs: "I will bow, bow, and bend like the willow the willow that leans with the winds of Heaven; that yields and sways and is wrought upon by the Spirit, the willow that grows beside the Living Fountain of the Most High...." So runs, in essence, the same leitmotif of humility--of surrender of self to the operations of spiritual power, that are so intensely interwoven through all Shaker doctrine and worship and song.

The Willow Songs hark back to the days of the founding of the Societies in the opening years of the Nineteenth Century. The doctrinal concept they imply goes back prior to 1796, for it was in that year that Father Joseph Meacham died. He it was who, while head of the Order, stressed the need for walking in the valley and for humbling oneself to Gospel meekness, and he it was who found it very hard indeed (perhaps because of his upbringing as a Baptist) to accommodate his limbs to the swaying of the dance. So we find him taking up the still older concept of Father James Whittaker--his predecessor in the Ministry as First Elder of the Shakers--which was to bend as well as to sway to the rhythms of the hymns, and to increase the bending in deepest, slowest obeisance, to use the bending and swaying to limber one's body, to render it the more ready to receive manifestations of power and all good gifts.

The tempo of the willow songs varies--not only in the speed of the swayings that were imitative of the tree's lithe swayings in the winds of heaven, but also in the basic rhythms.

### LIMBER LIMBER

Limber, limber, I will be  
Like the bending willow tree  
Pride and Stiff shan't hinder me  
I will be limber, limber  
I will be free, I will be free.  
The flesh shall never bind me  
I will fight, I'll keep my right  
In this pretty kingdom.

### ANTHEM

I will bow my soul to God;  
I will labor to be low, low  
low, low, low, low, low. . .  
I will shout and sing praises,  
to God for this great salvation from sin.



# TRAVELLING TUNE

The gifts of God are free for all  
 Fah na nis ka na na  
 They'll purify and cleanse the soul  
 O la nis ka na na  
 To every soul that will keep low  
 Fan nis ka na na  
 The gifts of God to them will flow  
 O la nis ka na na.

## ANTHEM

Wo mo sa selen do ve  
 Vi da ne vum vi lane voo  
 O ri sa ne van cri sa ne voo  
 O Mother lay me low lay me low  
 Where you se van do O may find me

(The final syllables, se van de O, in this hymn are often used in the code hymns and mean angels or messengers, bringers of "gifts.")

## (UNTITLED HYMN)

Why can't I bow why can't I bend  
 Bend my stiff neck into the work of Mother  
 O I will bow yea I will bend  
 And while the fire is hot  
 Keep old nature squirming.

## VII. A Shaker Hymn And A Glossary

Following is the text of a Shaker hymn and a glossary of some of the common words and phrases used with symbolic and peculiarly Shaker-doctrinal meanings. The verse and the tune of this hymn are as voluminous as the other western Shaker hymns of the early 1800's; the hymn was found in a book which is undated but which contains some hymns which are dated 1842. This may indicate that this version was actually received in Canterbury, an eastern Community. Again the date may indicate only that this was a long treasured hymn and, as found in this book, was one of a collection of such old hymns of the Order.



## ZEALOUS LABOUR

Now by my motion I shall prove  
How much the word of God I love,  
For on the tree that fruit which shows,  
Is found the limbs on which it grows.  
Then let my limbs with fruit be strong  
While labouring such a living song  
Come all my active powers arise  
And make a living sacrifice.

Stand up my soul and clear my way  
And give me room to dance and play;  
O cast me loose from every drag,  
As Samuel hewed the base Agag:  
For why should sluggish flesh control  
And bind my ever-living soul?  
Such lawless bondage shall not be  
As God is true, I will be free!

O how I love to be released  
From every feeling of a beast.  
No more to feel one poison dart,  
Of his vile stuff about my heart;  
But now I'm labouring with my might  
No hateful Beast will heave in sight;  
And every living step I tread  
I try to put it on his head!

I need not think of gaining much  
To give the floor an easy touch;  
Or labour in some handsome form  
That scarce will keep my ankles warm:  
For I have not so far increased  
That I can manage such a beast,  
Without my blood is nicely heat  
And my whole body flows with sweat.

Tell me no more it is not good  
To labour sharp and heat the blood;  
For this is but a vain excuse,  
To let a fleshly nature loose:  
For I have proved the matter through  
Whatever work I find to do;  
Unless I do it with my might  
I never feel like I'm doing right.

Now here's my faith I speak it plain,  
And let my feet the sense explain;  
With zeal to labour and unite,  
With every gift that comes to light;  
If in "back order" there I spring,  
If in the "step manner," or "to sing"  
If "shuffling," I will do my best,  
To keep my union with the rest.



The reason why I sing so long  
 And "step" the notes so quick and strong  
 Is just because that God hath done  
 What he hath promised in his Son:  
 He sent the everlasting key,  
 Which opens Heaven where I be;  
 This animates ME while I move  
 For this strong key is strength and love.

Now everyone that helps me sing  
 May their meat-off'rings freely bring;  
 For here's our altar blazing hot,  
 To burn the sluggard and the sot:  
 So let the house be filled with smoke  
 That ev'ry wanton beast make choke:  
 Then round the altar let us play  
 And glorify the blessed day.

(A Shaker hymn, with tune, from Canterbury, N. H.)

## GLOSSARY

### Motion:

A term with many shades of meaning, basically whatever visible motions of the hand, head, foot, body, hips, arms, knees, fingers, or all these simultaneously might be caused spontaneously by the "operations" of inner impulses generated by spiritual, even divine, forces. In this sense motion was beyond one's own control.

It is used also to designate intended motion, even of pantomimic nature.

Words associated with motion in the diaries, journals, hymn verse are: sway, bend, bow, quiver, be moved, invite with the hand, the jerks, the bends, writhing and twisting, whirling, hopping, trampling down, beating with the foot or hand (to the time of the song), step, march, travel, throwing one's body or one's arms about.

Referred to by later Shakers as the "unordered period" of worship--surely describable by the word "disordered"--their word for it was "promiscuous," meaning thereby, "not regulated" or "each one as the spirit moved." The Shakers definitely trace the patterns of their dancing to these varieties of "motion," thus closely reinforcing their concept that the dance "manner" was derived from spiritual sources; each "manner" of the dance (we would call it sometimes the dance step or the combination of steps into a pattern) had its own "order" or correct way and sequence. In some of the dances the "promiscuous manner" was retained in part. But the general performance in this unregulated fashion was relegated to the past after some years and then called the "back" or "ancient manner." It did retain a certain sanctity, for on certain special occasions it is



recorded that the "back" or "promiscuous manner" of the dance was briefly revived—a kind of nostalgic looking backward to the days of the First Parents of Shakerism and a return to their ways, perhaps to measure how far in the interim the Believers had indeed travelled or failed to travel. "Believers" was the name the Shakers preferred to call themselves.

Motioning of songs is mentioned often. This was a limited meaning of the term and connoted a kind of pantomimic, or else a merely rhythm-tapping motion of either arms and hands or the feet. In these senses anyone familiar with Froebellian practice, based on instinctive motion in response to rhythms, or on the small child's equally instinctive urge to act out what he speaks or sings or says, will recognize the Shakers' genius for seizing the instinctive and raising it to the level of religious practice and meaning. Too, he will recognize any kindergartener's instinctive (and tutored) employment of such motion as a teaching method; and seized upon as the essence of all folk-games and dances. New "motions" in Shaker meetings were often simply the spontaneous uniting of all present with the "gift" suddenly showed by one or more members, perhaps in response to a song only that moment "received." Again it is recorded that the elder or eldress announced a new gift of motion received. Mother Lucy was particularly interested in the many new motions that sprang up; she made comment on which were seemly or which "made mock." She called before her one of the most promising of the young believers and gently bade him think for himself if he was likely to become a ringleader in too boisterous worship! (In quite the same spirit against superfluity of motion, as when she cautioned the same lad against using two colors of ink where his scholars might gain such worldly love of luxury! His alibi in his diary was that he "never had descended to write anything SACRED like hymns, in RED ink!" But he forthwith destroyed all his cherished small bottles of berry inks he had been experimenting with.)

Every use of the word motion—like so many Shaker words that seem very ordinary to us worldlings—has really to be defined in the context of its use. Usually then, motion was the outward, visible, physical response of the individual, whether alone, or in company, to the inner spiritual urge to expression through bodily members. It could be joyful or "make one alive"; more often it came closer to the camp meeting experience, for it brought one "low"; made him ashamed before his fellows or in his own heart. In short, to use the Shaker phrase, "to be operated on, even of the Lord, was often a sore cross upon nature and proved one in the Gospel way by how one bore up under the experience."

Throughout the spirit era motioning of songs seems to have been greatly elaborated; and therewith too there was much added symbolism. So much so that in time the Shakers closed their meetings to the public because of disturbances created and the worldly inability to keep pace with their symbolism enough to understand and treat uncritically their "motions" in ritual, and even more their symbolic use of words in the hymns which worldlings conceived to have quite different and often lewd meanings.



It is of special interest, musicologically, that whereas other protestant sects for the most part and soon discarded motion and all the jerks and other camp meeting phenomena, the Shakers caught up all these primitive, ecstatic forms of "motion" and made them an integral part of their worship, more especially of their ritual and of the dance. In their most concentrated form the various kinds of motion show forth slowly as one accumulates data on their spiritual era of worship, for it was then that they devised the worship in their Holy Mounts or Chosen Valley (there were different names, called spiritual names, for each of these special areas, where ritualistic worship occurred out of doors for a number of years).

Fruit: One's behavior.

Tree:

The Tree of Life, a very special concept in Shaker theology, subject of some of their peculiar religious drawings, said to have been drawn "under operations" by persons not always so gifted in ordinary senses.

Limbs:

The limbs of the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life and the Willow concepts are at times confused or blended in some of their hymn verse. So at some homes, today one will find, not the willow tree before the door of the homestead, but the arbor vitae. Again when one will be told, "The trees are there; we planted them, with such and such a ceremony," it is that only Shakers are gifted to see them.

My Limbs:

This means all the members of the body, not just arms and legs. Head, shoulders, trunk as well might be separately agitated in motion while singing, labouring, or travelling (all the while in the meeting, of course).

Labouring:

To labour is to be thrilled, moved, agitated, in response to inner moving impulse or religious message or song, therefore to vibrate visibly. Descriptions of labouring sometimes indicate merely a kind of teetering on tiptoe, at times a kind of mass swaying forward and back while maintaining the ranks or "standing order": again it was like wild and concentrated pacing of the floor under the force of doctrinal exposition or the recital of one's "testimony." Such responsive vibration was to the music alone, or to the doctrinal message.



The word is used to indicate so many kinds and nuances of behaviour that it is almost indefinable with any exactness. It is very often used as a verb transitive: one "laboured a tune" or one "laboured a few songs" then sang a hymn standing, then laboured while uniting to receive humility. It was not exactly the same as to shake for the two terms are often used distinctively in the same sentence or hymn. Actually, I have come to think that these terms themselves went through considerable evolution as to meaning and thus contributed perhaps to the doctrinal growth as well as being in turn influenced.

### Sacrifice:

Note the rhyming of this word, the long drawn vowel, noted in many otherwise awkward verses and contributing also to the peculiar rhythmic effects in the music itself. Here the word means specifically to shake until one feels silly, foolish or changed—thus the sacrifice is of one's pride. The humiliation-humility theme of the valley songs in another guise.

### Beast:

Entirely Biblical usage this, meaning "the Flesh," evil, sin, desire, and all recalcitrancy within oneself—hence to be trodden down.

### Feeling of a beast:

Wilfulness, worldliness to be forsworn, sexuality, pride, sinfulness, longings for superfluities.

### Around my heart:

Resentment, unwillingness to obey the Light, jealousy, unhappiness, disorderly impulses—all of which, though experienced by beginners in the faith, were even so likely to constrict the heart with feelings of depression, actual pain, etc. Such were the experiences one might feel while "labouring in the valley"; it was from such that "true travel in the valley" gave release; and joy followed. The valley songs that were all joy actually seem to have been voiced by a matured Shaker "traveller" who had won his or her joy by travail; the words travail and travel are sometimes used interchangeably.

### No hateful beast will heave in sight:

Shaking, labouring, singing of hymns, the dance, all seem to have been conceived to have some talismanic value against sin within oneself; and similar effect was definitely sought when these forces were "applied" by the group, all uniting in the dance—for example, in behalf of an erring member of the group. There was power in such action,



power not only to drive out sin, but to encourage effort in the falterer, power also to convict; and there are records of the use of singing and of dancing by Shaker congregations to confound the oppressor, or the worldlings who on occasion sought to desecrate the Lord's Meeting by catcalls, or jeers, or mockery or noisy behavior. Some power there must have been; for there are records when mob action was arrested by such action. Again a delightful story of the Shaker sisters who "with one accord arose and shooed the whole of the World's kind out from the Meetinghouse" and then returned themselves, with all decorum to complete the interrupted service! No doubt is left, in the account, that the "shooing" was full of actual "motion", for it was accompanied also "with the soft hisses which altogether sounded like a flock of angry geese!"

#### Living step:

No lackadaisical dancing was tolerated in worship. "Come, be alive," the old hymns say. The step itself must be live as well as lively, not sluggishly or sloppily executed even when at the slowest pace. The foot must be lifted and set down, the sole of the shoe in some dances not to be heard, in others to be set down with so firm a motion that the dance in question was called the "drumming manner," from the sound of the feet. Though cloth shoes were the usual meeting shoes (to promote exertion of the feet, without help of leather) certain special dances came later which caused special shoes to be made, something a little like our toe dancer's shoe, but with the whole sole made heavier. In this song, the last two lines would probably have been "motioned"—pantomimed—and the "tread" and "head" notes tramped heavily and most realistically.

#### Gain much...easy tread:

The vigor put into the labouring or the dancing of a hymn was of the very essence of its rendering; it was the measure of how much one united with the sentiments of the hymn. Where especially vigorous sentiments were expressed with vigorous benefit to be gained by the singer or the dancer therefrom, of such exceedingly vigorous gestures and action was the "received" pattern that there are accounts of the knee striking the chin, rhythmically, or the hands the floor. The easy tread, unless indicated by the words of the hymn, was a mark of slovenly religious devotion only to be tolerated for reason of greatest age and infirmity.

#### Handsome form:

No aping of ballroom suavities, one would surmise.

#### Ankles warm:

It takes quite a bit of agility to warm the ankles in dancing.



Increased:

Gained in gospel gift, in power over one's own irreligious impulses, thought, behavior—even though secret.

Vain excuse:

Aimed, I think, at the younger people who at first, in youth's exuberance, might feel the dance in its physical effects rather than its spiritual; also at the current ballroom tendency to glide instead of either stepping or travelling—in the day of the waltz and the schottische, which some might have learned ere they joined the Shakers. (There were, however, several rather late manners of the Shaker dance which bore considerable likeness to mundane steps requiring a slip or slide of the foot!)

Some have thought the Shaker "step manner" required a sliding of the foot; its name implies this; manuscript descriptions state there was a "lift on the foot"; this is very different from a sliding of the foot as the description further shows; viz., "the weight of the body is carried from the heel to the toe and in that instant the heel lifts but the toe never leaves its place. It is the other foot that makes the forward or backward move." (Note elsewhere in these pages the young elder's worry over whether to move two or three steps forward in such manner.)

Whatever work:

"Hands to work and hearts to God" was the Shaker motto.  
"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might!"

My might:

Salvation came of one's own effort, through reaching out for saintly life on the earth and in the hereafter.

Where I be:

The Millenium on earth, right in the Shaker community; for they felt assured that there was indeed a great deal of heaven being worked out in their way of life, a true preparation for the Heaven they were all travelling toward. The Christly spirit with a garden hoe in the herb garden, behind a weaver's loom, penning a new hymn lest any scrap of divine message be lost. Was not Christ himself a carpenter? Was not Mother Ann a worker at the loom in old Manchester, a cook for strangers after her long stormy voyage to America? Where better to find the divine way, than among human kind whom He created and into whom He ever breathes His Spirit?



Animates me while I move:

Faith and the inner moving christ spirit (they do not always capitalize the word) invariably stir one; emotion must find outlet in motion; so must the religious impulse.

Everyone...meat off'ring:

Uniting in the dance, or hymn singing, enhances its salutary power, carries its power further. Many of the songs were both in the music and the verse keyed to the minor in devotional spirit. One determinedly brought to meeting (and left there, if only one could properly unite in its spirit) all one's trials, weariness, unworthiness. Each service was both of praise and sacrifice: sacrifice of will, of pride, of umbrage, or other ill-treasured burdens.

Our altar:

Always in any Shaker gathering, even while at work, there was an invisible altar, the spirit of devotion, whereon whether physical labor, or weariness of soul, or song, or just one's presence, something was daily and hourly laid upon the altar of the Common Good, the community's life and well being and travel onward to God. More often the symbolism used in Shaker writings is that of the Fountain of Life, the Fountain of Living Water; this indeed was the central symbol of all their Holy Mount ceremonies, for the Fountain there was invisible; it was the Altar, and "to dance and play" around it was a recurrent phrase in their hymns of that period. Lest some be so humble as to be unable to grasp the symbolism unaided, much labor was devoted to building a small enclosure around the mystical place, to grassing it with velvety sward, to keeping it tended; and at the head was for a time standing The Lord's Stone with sacred inscription. But many Shaker writings testify that the real altar is within the soul; that it is the inner sacrifice which counts for spiritual victory and saintly achievement.

Play:

Again this word, with religious content, frequently associated with "dance." As David danced, as Miriam played and with her maidens sang and danced before the altar of the Lord.

The coupling of "altar," "let us play," and "glorify the blessed day" sounds as if this might well be a ritual song for Mother Ann's Day which is always called the "Blessed Day," her birthday. Only very late did this ceremonial observance seem to be merged with Christmas (the earlier Day of Sacrifice, which was later moved on to New Year's Day). Ann's Day occurred in the fall and so got mingled also with harvest ceremonies, which also were part of the "Cleansing Gift" when houses and barns and fields alike were assiduously cleansed of all rubbish against the coming winter. Then at Christmas human hearts and minds and souls were put to the cleansing gift; in fact, the whole was a continuous stream of symbolic observance along with the physical tasks. One ate only bread and drank only water until sundown on Christmas Day--a kind of "love feast" or



sacrificial meal (they did not observe Communion as the Lord's Supper); this meal and the retirement to solitude and meditation that went with it were symbolic sacrifice, the real sacrifice being consummated later in the wiping out of all ill-will, all harbored grievances, one against the other, between the members, ere the year should end.

Obviously there is much in the Shaker symbolism which is generically Christian, some that seems Hebraic, and much that is deliverately (according to their manuscripts) very early Christian in pattern. In reading their hymns, as indeed all their manuscripts, one must hark back to early church, early England, early New England, early Ohio, and Kentucky to find kindred psychology and behavior in primitive religious reactions, and the primitives of our own Protestant Era. Yet for all the historic record is clear that many streams met in the Shaker personnel; they yet achieved a blending and a potent flavor to all their ways which can only be called Shaker--that was their own peculiar way of life and thought. Of that peculiarity one can grasp real understanding only very slowly, for one literally has to soak it in from contact with its endless manifestations.

Simple, ordinary words carried much and deep meaning when "received" by Shaker "instruments of the divine spirit."

Washington, D. C.

Estella T. Weeks

#### ANNUAL MEETING

The eighth annual meeting of The Hoosier Folklore Society was held at Catherine's Tea Room, in Indianapolis, Indiana, October 25, 1945.

Following the dinner, which began at 6:00 P.M., President William Hugh Hansen introduced Prof. Thelma G. James of Wayne University. Prof. James discussed "Where to Look for Folklore"; and she pointed out that one's family, one's friends, one's students, one's colleagues, the family next door, the policeman on the beat, the minister, the janitor, the total stranger--all are potential informants with valuable traditional material. With apt illustrations from her own collecting experiences, with humor and understanding, she invited and stimulated her audience "to collect."

Paul Brewster, of Bloomington, Indiana, collector and editor of Ballads and Songs of Indiana, discussed "Aids to the Collector," pointing out that an interest in people, though not too aggressive, is the watchword of successful collecting.

In the business meeting, the reports of the secretary and of the treasurer disclosed that the membership was healthy and that the society was solvent--but that some 1946 dues had been paid and that the December Bulletin had not been issued or paid for. To improve this latter condition, the members present voted to increase the membership dues to two dollars a year, since the one-dollar membership charge had not been sufficient to meet the cost of the Bulletin, of stamps, envelopes, and notices.



Prof. Stith Thompson, who headed the Nomination Committee, moved that the Society adopt a practice of other similar organizations in electing the same slate of officers for two years in succession. The motion was passed.

Prof. Jansen then presented for discussion the problem of widening the scope of the Hoosier Folklore Bulletin and of issuing it in printed form. He pointed out that there were two possibilities open to the Society; to inaugurate a bulletin for the Middle West to be published jointly, and in turn, by the state societies or to widen the interest and coverage of the present Bulletin, but to keep it in the control of the Hoosier Folklore Society. The officers of the Society were instructed to study the problem and to work out a desirable course of action.

Ernest W. Baughman

### NOTES

#### A FURTHER NOTE--ON "SWAPPING SONG"

The note and query on p. 56 in this Bulletin's last issue produced two very worthwhile communications, which I should like to share with the Bulletin's readers. The first came from C. C. Tullis of Rensselaer, Indiana, and is here produced in part:

Upon inquiring among the students of Mt. Ayr High School, I found one boy who had heard the song before. His name is Leon Littleton and he is quite a ballad singer in his own right.

He says he heard Bradley Kincaid sing it over the radio some time ago.

And here is the song as forwarded so kindly by Reader Tullis with the title--and a good one, it is--as submitted, I suppose by Leon Littleton.

#### Swapping Song

When I was a little boy I lived by myself,  
And all the bread and cheese I got I laid upon the shelf.

Tum a wing wang waddle, tum a jack straw straddle,  
Tum a John Fair faddle, tum a long way home.

Well, the rats and the mice they led me such a life,  
I had to go to London to buy me a wife.

Tum, etc.

The creeks were so wide and the lanes were so narrow,  
I had to bring her home on an old wheelbarrow.

Tum, etc.

My wheelbarrow broke and I got me a fall,  
And down came wheelbarrow, wife and all.



I swapped my wheelbarrow and got me a horse,  
And then I rode from cross to cross.

I swapped my horse and got me a mare,  
And then I rode from fair to fair.

I swapped my mare and got me a mule,  
And then I rode like a doggone fool.

I swapped my mule and got me a cow,  
And in that trade I just learned how.

I swapped my cow and got me a calf,  
And in that trade I just lost half.

I swapped my calf and got me a sheep,  
And then I rode till I went to sleep.

I swapped my sheep and got me a hen,  
And O what a pretty thing I had then.

I swapped my hen and got me a rat,  
I set it on a hay stack with two little cats.

I swapped my rat and got me a mole,  
And the doggone thing went straight to his hole.

An interesting form of the same ballad which had reached me rather deviously from rural New York state, this is a much fuller account, having more than twice as many stanzas as well as a different and more complicated refrain. My New York version had one technical device which this does not--in the New York version, it is quite obvious that the trader came off badly in each successive deal, whereas at least the first two swaps related above do not seem too unprofitable.

The closest word parallels to the New York version are afforded between the eighth stanza above and

And I sold one horse and I bought me a cow;  
I never made a bargain 'til I knew how:

and between the ninth stanza above and

I sold my cow and bought me a calf,  
Never knew a bargain 'til I lost half

It is perhaps worthy of note that in both variants, the parallels occur in consecutive stanzas.

The very day that the "Swapping Song" arrived, there also came a communication from Miss Rosemary P. Robin, a student at Indiana University, in which was the first stanza (all she could remember) of a song she had learned ten years ago from her piano teacher in Sunnyside, Long Island, New York.



When I was a bachelor, I lived by myself,  
 A d all the bread and cheese I had I kept in on the shelf.

To my wing wang waddle,  
 To my jack-straw saddle,  
 To my john far faddle,  
 To my long way home.

The difference in spelling between this chorus and the one in "Swapping Song" is interesting. Is Miss Robin's more accurate, or is it an attempt to rationalize nonsense syllables?

Miss Robin also supplies the information that the song is in the repertoire of Richard Dyer-Bennett, whom she heard sing it in New York City's Town Hall on Easter Sunday, 1945.

With <sup>the</sup> editor's indulgence I should like to close this note with an expression of my gratitude to Readers Tullis and Robin for their aid and for providing a further example that all folklore remains a cooperative enterprise.

Indiana University

William Hugh Jansen